

Downtown Commission Meeting
Minutes of June 11, 2010
8:30 a.m.
1st Floor North Conference Room - City Hall

Present: Vice-Chairman Dwight Butner, Presiding; Councilman Jan Davis, Mr. Guadalupe Chavarria, Mr. Byron Greiner, Ms. Kitty Love, Mr. Michael McDonough, Mr. Matthew Sprouse, Ms. Rebecca Hecht, Mr. Jimi Rentz, and Mr. Bruce Hazzard

Absent: Ms. Pamela Myers

Vice-Chairman Butner called the meeting to order at 8:30 p.m. and informed the audience of the public hearing process.

Administrative

- ? Mr. Greiner moved to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2010, meeting. This motion was seconded by Mr. Hazzard and carried unanimously.
- ? The Nominating Committee (Mr. Sprouse and Mr. Hazzard) put forward Vice-Chairman Butner and Ms. Kitty Love as names for the Chairman. They suggested the highest vote-getter be Chairman and the next top vote-getter be Vice-Chairman. After the entire Commission wrote their preference for Chairman, and after the votes were read, Vice-Chairman Butner was announced Chairman and Ms. Love was announced as Vice-Chair.

Updates

Downtown Association

Mr. Greiner invited the Commissioners to a Member to Member mixer at Pack Tavern on June 16 to welcome Joe Minicozzi as their Interim Executive Director of the Downtown Association.

Downtown Task Force

Urban Planner Alan Glines said that due to changes in City Hall, they have wrapped the Downtown Task Force into the Development Services Task Force under Economic Development. He said their first meeting is Monday.

Other Liaisons or Issues

Urban Planner Jessica Bernstein advised the Commissioners that the Chrysler Building at 162 Coxe Avenue has been posted by our Building Safety Department that it needs to be evacuated or upgraded by July 19, 2010.

At the request of Chairman Butner, City Attorney Oast updated the Commissioners on the Zona Loft site. He also explained the Permit Extension Act.

Pack Permitting and Special Event Street Closures

Building Safety Director Robert Griffin said that recognizing that conditions and needs are different throughout the city, separate policies and guidelines have been developed for special events within the Central Business District and outside the Central Business District. In addition, a separate policy has been developed for special events at Pack Square Park. The policies for within the Central Business District and outside the Central Business District are still being developed. He explained the following the draft policy for events at Pack Square Park:

- ? South Pack Square and either North Market Street or Spruce Street within the limits of Pack Square Park must stay open for traffic Monday through Sunday.
- ? When North Market Street or Spruce Street within the limits of Pack Square Park is closed to vehicular traffic, it must be able to accommodate the passage of emergency vehicles, if necessary. A minimum of a 10-foot wide travel lane is required.
- ? Typically, North Pack Square can be closed without specific restrictions (if the closing is in conjunction with the rental of the Park).
- ? Special events that receive City of Asheville co-sponsorship or are approved by City Council may supersede the subject policy except for emergency vehicle access which is always required.

In response to Vice-Chair Love, Mr. Griffin said that exceptions to this policy for the next three years include Bele Chere Festival, and the six anchor events approved by City Council: Asheville Drum Circle, Asheville Greek Festival, Asheville Holiday Parade, Downtown After Five, Goombay Festival, and Shindig on the Green. Those events may affect street closures that affect the transit system. Those events are the exceptions to the transit system routes.

Mr. Griffin said that the per year frequency issue of how often a park can be rented if it is not in conjunction with one of the Council-approved events or another approval process attached to it is still on the table to be discussed.

In response to Chairman Butner, Mr. Griffin said that, after public input, he hoped to bring back to the Commissioners in August the Central Business District draft as well as an overlay of the map so they can see visually the transit streets.

Mr. Hazard moved to adopt the Special Events Temporary Street and/or Sidewalk Closures policy for Pack Square Park. This motion was seconded by Mr. Chavarria and carried unanimously.

Downtown Master Plan Implementation

Ms. Sasha Vrtunski, Downtown Master Plan Project Manager, updated the Commissioners on the activities of the Arts and Culture Subcommittee; the Historic Preservation Subcommittee; the Transportation and Parking Subcommittee; the Urban Design & Development Subcommittee; and the Downtown Management Subcommittee.

She said that at the City Council meeting on May 25, City Council asked that after the Planning & Zoning Commission reviews the Downtown Master Plan wording amendments, that they bypass the City Council Planning & Economic Development Committee, and go straight to a City Council worksession. She thought that worksession would be held possibly in mid-August.

Vice-Chair Love said that the Arts Alliance recommendation could be a meaningful process if everyone participates. This is an opportunity for us to galvanize a new entity and have a more functional system across the board. In addition, she noted that the HUB Alliance is working on a forum of where they want to bring individuals from cities that have adopted policy around arts and cultural programming that is based on economic development and cooperation within the community. She felt this is a great opportunity for us to start reaching out for new ideas.

As a result of the Downtown Association meeting, Chairman Butner suggested we expand the role of the Transportation and Parking Subcommittee to review the transportation access issue to downtown Friday and Saturday nights

Upon inquiry of Chairman Butner, Mr. Joe Minicozzi said that he will be scheduling some individuals from Greensboro to be on the Speaker Series to talk about business improvement districts. Ms. Vrtunski said that they will need to be clear on the outreach plan.

There was a brief discussion after Councilman Davis noted that City Council just authorized the City Manager to apply for and enter into an agreement with the N.C. Historic Preservation Office for a grant to update and expand the downtown Asheville National Register Historic District.

Other Business

Ms. Barb Mee, Transportation Planner who coordinates the City's bicycle and pedestrian programs, updated the Commissioners on the Hilliard Avenue sidewalk project (using stimulus funds) while showing a drawing of the planned sidewalks from Church Street almost to Coxe Avenue. She said that Hilliard Avenue will also be getting bike lanes as part of the project.

Mr. Greiner suggested better public information outreach for sidewalk and deck resurfacing. He asked that Ms. Mee provide that information to him so he could include it in the Asheville Downtown Association's weekly publication.

Councilman Davis said that since the sidewalk part on the north side of Hilliard Avenue going from Coxe Avenue up to Ashland Avenue is in poor repair and can't be repaired with stimulus funds under this project, he moved that the Downtown Commission ask the Public Works Department to raise the priority of this portion of sidewalk in the priority listing of street repairs. This motion was seconded by Mr. Chavarria and carried unanimously.

Downtown Master Plan Unified Development Ordinance Changes

Urban Planner Alan Glines said that this is a continued discussion from the April and May meetings on the Downtown Master Plan (DTMP) wording amendments that the Subcommittee has put into a matrix consisting of Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) reference, related action step from DTMP, current UDO requirement, proposed amendment, staff comment, and Design Action Committee comments.

Planning & Development Director Judy Daniel explained a staff consideration of the shadow requirements that affect parks. Staff proposes that the Commission consider the definitions of public spaces as an adjunct to the Plan for large public parks, smaller public parks, tiny pocket parks, plaza spaces, and courtyards. Staff didn't think it was necessary for the shadow limitations to apply to the smallest of these – the pocket parks. They are not intended for long-term use and to impose the shadow restrictions on them seemed counter-productive. This is a staff recommendation for the Commission's consideration.

Mr. McDonough suggested (1) language in the definitions of pocket parks and courtyard space that no shadow restrictions apply to these parks; and (2) clarification of public and private plazas noting that if it's a private plaza it doesn't have shadow restrictions.

Discussion was then held during Mr. Glines' and Ms. Bernstein's detailed review (with maps) of items 24 (portion of) through the end on the matrix, with emphasis on the Design Action Committee's recommendations.

Chairman Butner stressed that this needs to be a merit-based process that allows people to use their property.

Mr. McDonough moved to adopt the DTMP wording amendments as detailed by Mr. Glines and Ms. Bernstein. This motion was seconded by Mr. Hazzard and carried unanimously.

In response to Mr. Rentz, Ms. Bernstein said that she would set up a subcommittee meeting regarding the number of people allowed on Roger McGuire Green on any given event and forward that information to the Building Safety Department, which handles permitting.

Adjournment

Ms. Hecht moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:51 a.m. This motion was seconded by Mr. Rentz and carried unanimously.